# Content Marketing Decoded

*A Complete DIY Guide to Content Marketing for Your Brand or Business*

*By*
Godot Media
http://www.godotmedia.com

**godot**

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# 1. About Godot Media

Content Marketing is fast becoming the preferred way of reaching out to customers and building a brand. Both traditional and digital marketers swear by its effectiveness and are employing innovative ways to create 'real' engagement with the brand and the company's products and services. According to a recent survey in the US:

- An average company devotes $152,850 to custom content creation.
- 9 out of 10 organizations already market with content marketing
- 60% of companies plan to increase their spending on content marketing
- 62% of B2B marketers use outsourcing for content marketing
- 77% of large firms outsource some of their content development.

In the words of Marc Andreessen, co-founder of Netscape, and co-founder and general partner of Silicon Valley venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz, "As consumer behavior broadly moves from old media to the web, the opportunity for high-end online content is gigantic...".

Godot Media offers content marketing solutions to clients across industries and in over 20 countries. We work with companies to enhance their online presence through high-impact and targeted content. Our quality content communicates the value of our clients' offerings, and helps them create a strong connect with their customers and build valuable brands.

Visit our website http://www.godotmedia.com to find more about how we are changing the way companies engage with customers online.

# 2. What Is Content Marketing?

Content marketing is a broad term given to the processes of creating content and marketing it. The content can be of many types – textual, infographs, images, videos, etc., but the core purpose is to directly or indirectly lure potential customers and to expand existing customer bases.

Although, content marketing is mainly done over the internet, it can also be done physically via say; magazines, brochures, etc. Customers are intelligent and aware these days, and are shunning traditional advertising practices. Marketing through content allows businesses to inform and educate their customers. Instead of being bombarded with tall claims and confusing messages, as is the case with conventional advertising practices, content marketing allows the customer to make informed decisions about the products and services on offer.



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## The growth of content marketing

Content marketing is everywhere - from printed magazines to emails, websites, webcasts, podcasts, newsletters, etc. Even the articles and images that you see on Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites are forms of content marketing. It has gained so much importance that businesses and individuals are hiring the services of content writers when they need content for their websites, web pages, social network pages, blogs, etc. This form of marketing has given rise to custom media, brand marketing, branded content, custom publishing and database marketing.

Search engines like Google play an important part in creating online exposure for businesses. As content marketing is based on the idea of sharing information, online marketers must make sure that their content is featured prominently in web searches. This has given rise to a breed of "content engineers" who not only create but also optimize the content for better search engine rankings. Recent surveys have shown that this marketing technique now outranks brand awareness and sales as the leading tool for lead generation.

## How to market with content effectively

First, you must think of the kind of audience and customers you want to attract. Based on this you can decide the content that needs to be created. Make sure to have control over the design, creation and styling processes. Create an online presence with blogs and a website. SEO basics will come in handy, so make sure to include keywords and search terms in the content and optimize the title tags, headers, etc. for search engine algorithms. Set up contact forms and auto responders to provide potential customers and leads with more information. Update the content regularly and promote them through email marketing, social media websites, Google URL builder, etc.

It is imperative that you interact with and engage interested leads using your published content. Make sure to respond to their comments on social media sites and continue this interaction through emails, telephonic conversations and ultimately in face-to-face meetings. To make useful connections on social networks, use tools like HootSuite, TweetDeck, SocialBro, etc. to keep abreast of all the conversations

around your content. Your content should allow you to have a ready audience for future content pieces that you release. Finally, content marketing should be made an intrinsic part of the overall marketing strategy.

It cannot be stressed enough – content is the most important part of this marketing technique. If the content is not interesting, informative, accurate and relevant then it will not gain much visibility. Google algorithms have now been changed to give higher rankings to good content. Before anything else, make sure every single piece of published content is of top quality.

# 3. History of Content Marketing

Some experts say that content marketing started with the caveman as we have been able to find the first forms of custom publishing in the form of cave paintings dating back to 4200 B.C. However, most agree that John Deere was the pioneering company in content marketing. It launched its first customer magazine known as "The Furrow" in 1895 and it is still running. This magazine is considered to be a shining example of content marketing because instead of just offering advertisements and promotions to customers, it offered valuable content that customers could benefit from.

Another early example of content marketing is the 400-page long guide offered by Michelin Tires for its customers. This guide offered tips on automobile care, travel tips and other vehicle related information and was distributed for free by the company. The guide became so successful that soon the company was able to sell the guides for a profit. Jell-O is another brand that was able to use innovative content marketing early on to not only increase profits but to also make the brand a household name.

When the company was founded, no one knew what Jell-O was and no one ate the product. The brand launched its own cookbook with recipes involving Jell-O. This book showed customers how they could use Jell-O in daily cooking and cook up fabulous desserts with very little time and effort using Jell-O. Other major companies like P&G, Microsoft, Nike, etc. have practiced content marketing over the years, way before the Internet was born.



*Photo by EHC Red Bull München [CC-BY-SA-3.0], via Wikimedia Commons*

More recently, Red Bull is the brand that everyone refers to when talking about exceptional content marketing. The brand sells only the Red Bull energy drink, but has been able to make itself synonymous with a high-adventure, high-adrenaline lifestyle. Their website and magazine called "Red Bulletin" publishes some of the best images, videos and textual content related to adventure sports. Their content marketing division produces unique content of such high quality that it has been compared to some major publishing and media brands. More importantly, with their content, the brand has been able to attract their target audience and turn them into fans.

[Content marketing is now practiced by many companies](#) and more stick to distributing their content online as it keeps publishing costs to a minimum. Coca Cola, American Express, Google, etc. are some of the major companies using content marketing. Many smaller businesses rely almost solely on online content marketing to market the brand and its products and they have been able to achieve immense success.

## What content marketing should be?

Experts have been able to identify many distinct examples of content marketing even before the advent of the internet, because the brands were able to teach customer and offer content that they found useful with their marketing campaigns. The objective wasn't to advertise or promote the brand, but to help customers solve their problems. Content marketing is subtle promotion of the brand where customers are not thrust with blatant advertising and promotional materials but are in fact guided and helped by the brand.

The goals of content marketing has always been to attract new customers, to improve relationships with existing customers, promote the product by describing and demonstrating its benefits and using storytelling and user-generated content to keep customers interested. Of course the immediate goal of content marketing is to enable the brand to appear at the top of search results of major search engines.

Also, unlike Public Relations or PR, content marketing is not interruptive and aggressive. With content marketing brands can get interested customers and leads to come to them and such interested people have more intentions of engaging further with the brand and to buy products and services. PR is about making news and getting in the face of the customers. Content marketing is more about finding what kind of content people want and are searching for and then delivering such content via the right content distribution channels. This is why social media networks like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn play such an important part in content marketing.

# 4. 5 Principles Of Content Marketing
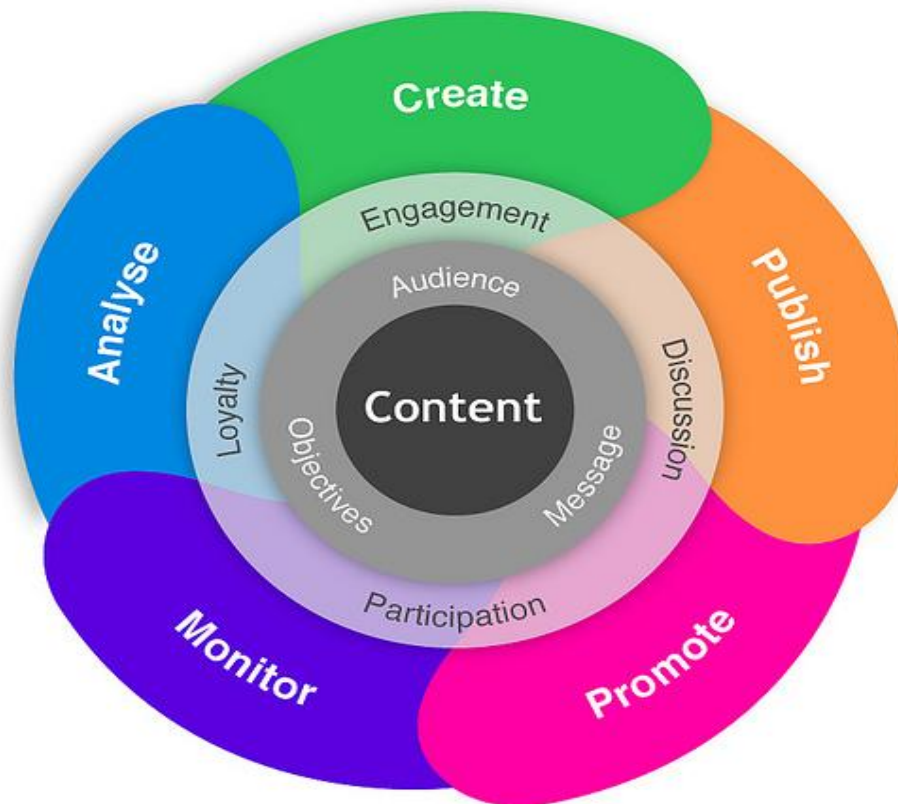


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There's no denying that Google has come to influence way too much in the online world. So much so that webmasters have to constantly keep in touch with what's Google up to, to ensure that their websites constantly feed on the much needed traffic.

On an average, most websites get about 50-80% of their traffic from search engines (read primarily Google). In such a scenario, it is only natural that Google algorithm updates create quite a stir, having a deep impact on hundreds of thousands of businesses across the world. The search engine giant is a towering influencer and ducking your face in the sand and ignoring the reality would not do much good. So, how do you Google-proof your online presence and traffic to your website?

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The answer is uncannily simple - stop worrying about Google and focus solely on engaging your customers/readers. The trick is to go back to basics of marketing in the real world and adapt them to the online reality. Here's how you can do it:

## Principle 1: Market Online as You Would Market Offline

There is no reason why online marketing rules should be fundamentally different from offline practices. The online customers ask the same question as offline customers - they want to know 'what's in it for them'. Show them the value in your offerings, dazzle them with exciting stuff and they will ask for more. Similarly, what loyalty programs offline achieve, the same success can be recreated online as well. Be creative, think what would you offer your customers to repeat offline and replicate the same online - if it is useful advice they cherish, then the analogy online would be a powerful blog which offers valuable information.

## Principle 2: Remember Word of Mouth is the Most Powerful Online

Many businesses across the world have catapulted to success because of the good word of mouth they commanded. This phenomenon is faster and more powerful online. With social channels like Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Google+, and many niche communities and networking platforms, you can now spread the word faster and more efficiently. Presence on these platforms is a must, but the buck does not stop here. Investing effort and creativity into popularizing these and getting your audience to participate on them is equally critical. The good news is that these channels are self-feeding to a large extent - once you get the momentum going, they will thrive and contribute majorly to your success.

Bottom line, get the conversations going! It's going to be tedious to kick start, but once done, the rewards will be multi-fold. Search engines like Google have made no secret of how they are reading trends off these social channels - in this line of thought, your popularity on these channels will be the indicator of your importance or growing influence on the Internet - something that may translate into search results as well.

## Principle 3: Build Credibility and Prove Authenticity

One of the key problems that Google faces optimizing the results for better user experience is fighting spam online. Link farms, bad content, keyword stuffing and poor value pages are all a part of this problem. Sites and pages with these intentions are shady and created hoping search engines would rank them well, or such pages will pass on the benefit to other intended sites or pages. Such content or pages online do not have the readers or visitors in mind. Google is going beyond this and looking for signals to merge the real and virtual world, and filtering out such spam.

The leading search engine is going great lengths to establish authenticity of websites and businesses, by looking for signals of their offline presence. For example, local business citations (mentions of local address with entity name on the web) have emerged to be an important factor for establishing authenticity of an online venture. It's only natural that the search engine would want to protect the interests of its users and hence give preference in search rankings to those businesses whose authenticity and links to the offline world can be better established. Such signals are also trust building for the audience of the website or business.

Other credibility building measures, such as being participants of some offline events (finding their mentions online as well), having a popular and well-read blog or a being a publisher of a popular eBooks (etc.) can benefit your Internet marketing strategy immensely. These too will produce natural links from various online properties, which will hold more regard in Google's eyes.

## Principle 4: Diversify Your Online Presence

Just like marketing through one channel in the real world often does not suffice, you would need to diversify your online presence too. Get registered on local directories, guest blog on relevant niche blogs, tweet, pin, podcast or market through videos - diversify your presence as much as possible. It's never a good idea to hold all your eggs in one basket. You never know what may click, become viral or get you the exposure that allows you the leap to the next level.

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## Principle 5: Think How You Can Grab More Eyeballs

Visitors to a trade show are most attracted to the stall that dazzles the most. Same holds true online too. Your website design, content, value proposition, social media presence - everything matters. Just the average won't do - you will have to dazzle, share your dream and find opportunities of standing out. Humble beginnings on smaller platforms may just be the stepping-stones to bigger exposure opportunities.

Keep looking for chances to be found on the Internet and give them an honest shot. It could be becoming a donor or member of a charity or guest blogging/advertising on an ardently followed blog. There are many ways of getting more eye balls - the most important thing is to be creative and never stop innovating.

# 5. Why Google Loves Great Content

So by now, you of course know that you need good content but do you really know why? There's more to it than meets the eye, and understanding these reasons will help you develop your content marketing strategy with confidence and clarity.

If you're not from the marketing industry and are wondering what's causing this sudden interest in quality content, the answer is one word – Google. Since the Panda/Penguin Google search algorithm updates, every online marketing expert worth his salt will tell you that Google will love you more if you create awesome content.



Photo *by Alexis Wilke (Own work) [*CC-BY-SA-3.0*], via Wikimedia*

*Commons*

And why does Google prefer great content? There are two reasons – the obvious and the unobvious one.

## The obvious reason – spam, spam, spam, and some more spam

Rewind to circa 2010. Most online marketers would spend a lot of time and effort on creating completely useless content; distribute it on article farms, spammy forums, and lots of other nasty places. These places served no purpose at all, but to be a permanent parking lot for bad content – for which they sometimes even charged a dollar or two. You could find content on almost any topic on these sites, but almost always, it would be so bad that you would never get the information you were looking for. Usually, these were just rhetorical articles repeating the same point again and again, often in broken English.

## Google's Surprise Attack

The problem was that Google's 2010 search algorithm wasn't smart enough to figure out that links coming back from these parking lots had no meaning. The links were just distorting the natural results from the algorithm.
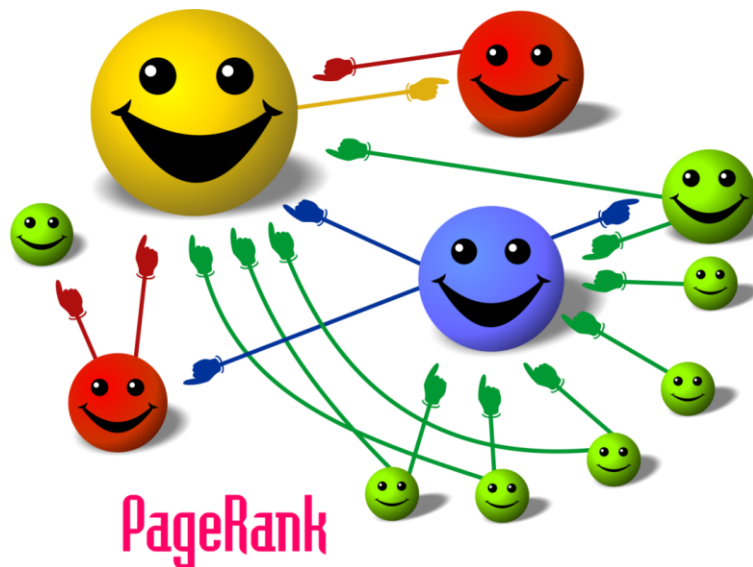


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After several warnings to marketers and website owners, Google decided to take matters in its own hands and launched an all-out attack against spam, under the innocuous names – Panda and Penguin. The two updates shook the online marketing world and led to some serious introspection among SEO

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experts. This is when marketers realized that crap content won't cut it and that the content they publish should be high quality, and even more importantly, valuable to the readers.

## The unobvious reason – good content is the sign of a good business

When you are shopping offline, you can judge a business by looking at its store, the packaging of its products and the way its representatives behave. This is not possible when you are just searching for a product or service on Google. To bring good businesses higher in its search rankings, Google needs to read as many reliable signals as it can. It cannot use humans to judge every business that has an online presence, so whatever signals it uses must be readable by an algorithm. And one of the easiest signals to read is textual content.

It is a fair assumption that a company that cares to write great content or hire great content writers, will also care for customer service and the quality of its products. This is a much better algorithmic assumption than simply counting the links back to a website.

## Corollary: Bad content is the sign of a bad business

In the same way, there is a pretty good chance that a company that does not care about the quality of the content it creates would also not care much about the quality of the products it sells or the level of service it provides to its customers.

A well-managed business shows attention to detail. It will have a good product, an efficient website, engaging and fresh content, and friendly and helpful people.

## Action Item: Get great people working on your content

Whether you choose to have your own team work on your content or you choose a writing company is a decision you need to make, taking into account several factors like:

a. Availability of good writers and researchers

b. Budget

c. How much management bandwidth you have to drive in-house content creation projects

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Whichever route you take, don't forget why you started creating content in the first place. Use the same quality benchmarks for content that you would use for your products.

Lastly, thank Google for making the internet a more trustworthy place - one where being on the top of search rankings shows credibility and quality, and not the ability to manipulate a system.

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